



### **Analysing American Advice Books for Single Mothers Raising Sons**

Essentialism, Culture and Guilt

*By Berit Åström*

**Pub Date:** 07 February 2023

**Binding:** Hardback

**Price:** £80.00 / \$110.00

**ISBN:** 9781785278884

**BISAC CATEGORY:** FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS /

Parenting / Single ParentSOCIAL SCIENCE / Gender

Studies, SOCIAL SCIENCE / Feminism & Feminist Theory

**BISAC CODE:** FAM034010

**BIC CODE:** JFSJ

**Extent:** 110 pages

**Size:** 153 x 229 mm / 6 x 9 inches

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**Analyses the normative pressures placed on single mothers raising sons in contemporary parenting literature and how traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity are used to undermine the mothers.**

Although single fathers as primary careers are on the rise, most single-parent households in the US are headed by women. These women are a lucrative market for parenting books and most of these books are aimed at single mothers raising sons. This intersectional study analyses the way in which these advice books draw on mother blame language, misconceptions of neuropsychological research and traditional conceptualisations of masculinity and femininity to convince the mother readers that they are unable to raise a son to be a man. The study further connects the advice books to a cultural backlash against ideas of 'involved fatherhood' and 'caring masculinity', exploring how the authors argue for a return to traditional family structures.

#### **Key selling points**

- Provides a comprehensive analysis of normative attitudes towards parenting
- Shows how traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity are used to undermine the mothers
- Analyses the way in which the books draw on mother-blame language, misconceptions of neuropsychological research and traditional conceptualisations of masculinity and femininity to convince the mother readers that they are unable to raise a son to be a man
- Shows how class and ethnicity interact with traditional assumptions of gender and biology to produce a genre of literature that is quite restrictive.

#### **Contents**

Introduction: Childcare and Advice in Times of Change; Gender: Borderwork, Science and the Dangerous Mother; Class and Race: Expectations of Mothers and Sons; Reinstating the Father: Fathers in Advice Books for Mothers; Conclusion; Appendix; Notes; Bibliography; Index

#### **About the Author(s) / Editor(s)**

Dr Berit Åström is an associate professor at the Department of Language Studies, Umeå University, Sweden. Her main research field is motherhood studies.

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